

PUBLIC WORKS

Pipeline

Clean Streets Contribute To Clear And Healthy Lakes

If you're a fan of Minnesota's 10,000 lakes and looking for ways to ensure that the ones nearest you remain pristine and healthy for years to come, you need look no further than your own front yard. By making some simple lawn maintenance best practices part of your routine, you can help Edina's Public Works Department minimize the City's environmental footprint.

When snow banks recede across town each spring, they leave behind a residue of salt, silt and trash. In response, the Public Works Department's Streets Division deploys its fleet of street sweepers across more than 200 miles of paved roadways and bicycle lanes. All told, a thorough City-wide sweep takes upwards of four weeks to complete.

Myriad benefits justify that outlay in time and expense, though. One of the more obvious is a marked increase in air quality. Unless swept, that fine layer of debris will slowly accumulate and be kicked up by every gust of wind.

Less conspicuous but no less important, these seasonal cleanings (street sweepers

also canvass the City each fall) also contribute to the upkeep of Edina's storm sewers. After repeated rains, garbage, decomposing leaves and other debris begin to clog sewer grates and pipes. In the short term, this can cause annoying and unsightly pools of standing water after a heavy rain. Moreover, it can also have serious and lasting repercussions for the area's fragile aquatic ecosystems.

"When water runs over [leaves, grass clippings and other decaying vegetation], it leaches out phosphorus and nitrogen," said Ross Bintner, Environmental Engineer. "The overabundance of these nutrients is a major contributor to the impairment of our local lakes, ponds and streams."

Phosphorus and nitrogen stimulate the rapid growth of destructive green algae blooms. These algae blooms, in turn, discolor the water and harm

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Edina Homeowners Play A Vital Role In The Upkeep Of Public Trees

Edina is near the heart of a bustling urban hub, but residents are treated each autumn to a display of fall colors to rival those found in some of the more rustic and “scenic” parts of the state. In the immediate vicinity of streets alone, the community boasts approximately 30,000 trees.

Although a City Forester and two Forestry Technicians work year-round to monitor and maintain the beauty of Edina’s trees, property owners, too, play a vital role in maintaining the health of this precious resource and in ensuring that overhanging boughs and other overgrowth do not present transit or safety concerns.

“Homeowners are responsible for maintaining all vegetation bordering their property – trees, shrubs and other plants – to comply with City ordinances on public safety,” said City Forester Tom Horwath.

Growth into boulevards (the term for that portion of the City’s right-of-way bordering the street itself, where sidewalks, street signage and fire hydrants may be placed) can impede a number of City operations. By law, all streets must be clear of vegetation to a height of 16 feet above the curb or street edge, and sidewalks to a height of 8 feet, regardless of whether the plot in question is private or public.

In addition, overhanging deadwood and rotting branches present a safety hazard and must be removed.

Ultimately, it is up to homeowners to make sure that their street-side foliage is in compliance with these rules, but Edina residents have a number of valuable local resources at their disposal.

Horwath is available for on-site consultations “to determine what needs to be done – or even to offer any advice on how to maintain these boulevard areas ... for aesthetic purposes.” Further, if you do not want or are unable to prune the growth yourself, you can contact him for a referral to a trusted third-party tree removal company.

When the City discovers overgrowth in residential areas, the homeowner is given three weeks’ notice to trim their trees back to an acceptable length. If, after that period, non-compliance is noted, the City will arrange for this work to be done at the expense of the homeowner.

If, however, in the judgment of any City official, “an immediate public safety hazardous condition exists which must be corrected immediately, the City will do the removal at no expense to the property owner,” Horwath said. In these cases, “All debris will be left on site and removal will be the responsibility of the property owner.”

For more information, contact Horwath at 952-826-0308.

– Compiled by David Katz





Routine Maintenance Helps Mailboxes Through Harsh Winter Months

By David Katz

When averaged out, the service life of a standard curbside mailbox probably isn't much longer than 15 years, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation. The statistic is hardly a surprising one, given exposure to the elements and other hazards they must endure.

Consequently, it is important to understand the circumstances under which, the property owner, is responsible for making repairs or for purchasing and installing a replacement mailbox.

When clearing the streets after a big snowfall, the Public Works Department's plow drivers take great care not to damage private property. On rare occasions, though, a plow might tip over or cause structural damage to a residential mailbox.

On such occasions, after the damage is brought to the City's attention, complaints are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If an inspection determines the principal cause was a collision involving a plow or other piece of City equipment, the Public Works Department's Streets Division will install a standard size, non-decorative metal mailbox. (If necessary, a 4-by-4-inch decay-resistant wood support post will also be installed by the City in the spring.) Alternatively, the City will reimburse the owner \$50 for a replacement box and post.

In the majority of cases, however, winter mailbox damage is the result of heavy snow or excessive ice. In these cases, the property owner is responsible for any and all repairs.

Likewise, if a mailbox is made unserviceable by age or by lack of maintenance, the City is not responsible for purchase or installation of a replacement.

In order to get the most out of your mailbox, Streets Supervisor John Scheerer strongly recommends periodic maintenance checks. "Most mailbox damages are the result of rotten posts or a mailbox poorly anchored to the post," Scheerer explained. If caught early enough, fixing the issue may not require the cost and time of assembling a new unit.

During the winter months, residents should also monitor the quantity of snow and debris surrounding their mailboxes. After City plows have removed snow from streets, residents should clear snow surrounding mailboxes to prevent snow from becoming compacted and heavy.

Failure to do so has consequences. According to Section No. 3.1.4 of the United States Postal Service code for Customer Mail Receptacles: "Customers must keep the approach to their mailboxes clear of obstructions to allow safe access for delivery. If USPS employees are impeded in reaching a mail receptacle, the postmaster may withdraw delivery service."

For more information, contact the City of Edina Public Works Department, 952-826-0376.

Molding Edina's Outdoor Ice Rinks Is An Art And A Science

By David Katz

A common misconception holds that constructing an outdoor ice rink is, in both principle and practice, little different from filling a giant ice cube tray: add water to an indented area, and wait for it to freeze. As anyone on the Parks Maintenance team can tell you, the reality is very different.

Early each winter, weeks before any of Edina's 12 outdoor rinks can be opened to the public, Parks Maintenance staff must first prep rink areas through a process aptly referred to as basemaking or base building.

"If we were to simply pour cold water into the holes, the soil would soak it up before it turned into our desired sheet of ice," said Parks Superintendent Vine Cockriel, who retired at the end of September. To prevent this from happening, the dirt bottom and sides of each rink are cooled until frozen solid. Only then will layers of water be added.

The importance of basemaking is hard to overstate. Naturally, in liquid state, water tends to "seep outside the confines of where we want it," Cockriel said. That means that a failure to follow protocol could potentially cause patchy surface ice to form outside the rink.

Work begins in earnest beginning the Monday after Thanksgiving. In addition to filling and smoothing the rinks, Parks personnel must see to a host of other, more minor tasks before the rinks are at the level Edina residents have come to expect. The specifics vary by park and by year, but common tasks include "replacing warped boards, redriving posts, changing out damaged fencing and piping, and, of course, repainting red and blue lines," Cockriel said.

Reconstructing the ice rinks each November and December is only half the story. Daily upkeep once they are opened is time and labor intensive. "Heavy use creates chips and grooves in the ice ... For usability and for safety, we need to top off the surface and take a sweeper tractor through."

The skating surfaces are regularly refreshed by adding three to 10 thin layers of water with a hose. After an accumulated snowfall, the City must also plow the rinks and shovel the perimeter. Rarely will a day go by when any of Edina's rinks does not receive some sort of touch up.

This level of attention ensures that every park rink remains serviceable for as long as the weather will permit – provided skaters treat the ice with respect.

This is easy enough to do. For one, never drive on the ice. Second, do not mess with nets. "Each day, a Parks staffer or warming house attendant will take down all nets," Cockriel said. If nets are left outside long enough, the rope may heat up to a point where it sticks to the ice and cannot be pulled away without causing some damage to the ice."

Edina's ice rinks can be found at: Cornelia School, 7142 Cornelia Drive; Countryside, 6240 Tracy Ave. S.; Creek Valley School, 6301 Gleason Road; Highlands, 5200 Doncaster Way; Lewis, 7300 Cahill Road; Normandale, 6501 Warren Ave. S.; Pamela, 4303 W. 58th St.; Strachauer, 6200 Beard Ave.; Todd, 4429 Vandervork Ave. S.; Walnut Ridge, 5801 Londonderry Road; and Weber, 4115 Grimes Ave. S.

For more information, visit www.EdinaMN.gov/index.php?section=park_maintenance.



Clear Your Sidewalks Of All Snow And Ice

For Minnesotans, “being neighborly” goes well beyond the occasional block party and a willingness to lend a cup of sugar. In the wake of blizzards and other severe weather, Edina residents have concrete and important obligations to one another.

In addition to their own driveways and walkways, property owners must remove snow from the public sidewalks that bisect their plots.

Edina City Code 1200.03 states: “All snow and ice shall be removed from a sidewalk by the owner of the property adjoining the sidewalk within 48 hours of the cessation of the precipitation.” Clearing sidewalks of all accumulation within two days is imperative because of the safety hazard they present to pedestrians.

You may use shovels or a snow blower, and are free to enlist the services of a contractor. (See Page 11.) However, you must adhere to several rules and bylaws when clearing snow.

Snow should never be pushed out into or across City streets, and should never be piled onto adjoining properties.

At the same time, take occasional note of how tall snow piles in your own yard are getting. If it looks like they

might present a sight obstruction to passing vehicles, redistribute some of the bulk.

In addition, residents should clear snow from around fire hydrants located on private property. Fire hydrants must be visible and accessible to emergency workers.

The City will issue a written notice to property owners with unshoveled sidewalks. If snow and ice are not removed within seven days after a warning is issued, residents may be charged for the cost of removal by the City, which could exceed \$300.

There are only a few particularly commercial and/or heavily-trafficked stretches of sidewalk where the City will remove snow. These include those along France and York avenues, Gleason Road and 70th Street.

Maintaining our sidewalk network is not strictly a winter responsibility, though. After the ground thaws in the spring, you may notice that some sidewalk panels have moved or shifted. Uneven pavement is a trip hazard that residents are encouraged to bring to the notice of the Public Works Department.

Residents can report trip hazards and other problems using the online service request, www.EdinaMN.gov/PublicWorks.



Keep Fire Hydrants Visible And Accessible At All Times

Fire hydrants lead something of a double existence. More often than not, these important but unassuming units are not even spared a passing glance.

In the event of a fire, though, they are the center of attention. Locating the nearest fire hydrant is one of the firefighters' first priorities. In some extreme cases, the ability to tap into the municipal water supply via a hydrant means the difference between life and death for those trapped inside a burning building.

Bear this in mind when shoveling snow in the winter and tending your lawn in the summer. Fire hydrants should be fully visible and accessible at all times.

"They are not meant to be hidden. That's why they're painted red," said Fire Chief Marty Scheerer.

According to Minnesota State Fire Code, there must be a three-foot cleared radius around all fire hydrants.

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This radius includes flower beds and other landscaping improvements. When you add bushes or replant trees in

your front yard, do so well away from any fire hydrants to account for future growth.

If anything, fire hydrants are even easier to overlook during the winter months. Clear all snow away from the hydrant and deposit it such that it will not obstruct the view of the unit from the street.

When shoveling, remember that fire hydrants are a neighborhood asset. Do not hesitate to clear snow away from any hydrant. If you see that a neighbor is out of town, clear snow away from a hydrant on their plot.

The City appreciates your helping hand. Approximately 2,000 fire hydrants dot Edina, and the City does not have the personnel to look after each.

For more information regarding fire hydrants, contact the Edina Fire Department at 952-826-0330.

— By David Katz and Jordan Gilgenbach

Plow Drivers Guided By Marking Stakes

When snow is heavy and City of Edina plow drivers begin working to clear snow from streets, stakes sometimes highlight hazardous areas. Marking stakes, used exclusively in winter months, are installed by the City of Edina in the fall to identify obstructions and reduce damage to residential and City property.

While residents may submit a request for marking stakes to be placed on their property, it is at the discretion of the City to decide what locales require marking stakes to alert plow drivers.

In the past, some residential properties have endured damage due to unique weather and plowing conditions. As a result, the City will not always place stakes in the same location each year. Residential requests will be managed and responded to on an individual basis.

As the City works to improve roadways and reconstruct neighborhoods by installing curbs and gutters, fewer stakes will be used.

“Our goal is to put in as few stakes as possible,” said Public Works Director Brian Olson. “We want to minimize damage to front yards. We put in hundreds of stakes and it takes a lot of labor hours to put them in and remove them.”

Stakes are typically removed late-March to early-April, once the frost melts and the ground becomes soft enough to pull the stakes out.

For more information on snow stakes or to request them on your property, contact the City of Edina Public Works Department, 952-826-0376.



City Covers The Cost Of Plow Damage To Sod

When snow falls and accumulates fast enough, the distinction between street, curb and lawn can become unclear. On the worst days, plow drivers must “feel” their way along streets in order to clear them.

While they do a commendable job on the whole, it is inevitable that there will be places each year where the plows do slight damage to the sod at the edge of plots. If this happens to your lawn, the City of Edina will cover the cost of new sod or grass seed and send out a Public Works crew to repair the turf the following spring.

After installation, it is the resident’s responsibility to tend to the new grass.

Streets Supervisor John Scheerer cautions that boulevards – the length of lawn immediately abutting the street pavement – are intended for utility uses and for snow deposition, not for gardening or other landscaping improvements. As a result, the City is not accountable for plow damage done to vegetation other than grass or to personal items other than mailboxes.

If a boulevard on your property is damaged by a snow plow, contact Public Works through the online service request form at www.EdinaMN.gov/PublicWorks.

– Compiled by Jordan Gilgenbach and David Katz



Be On The Lookout For Winter Water Main Breaks

We're no strangers to frozen puddles, morning frosts, refrozen snow runoff or any of the other

forms that ice takes in the winter. A little salting and a healthy dose of roadway precaution is usually all the response that is required; nature eventually takes care of the rest.

On the rarest of occasions, though, ice formation isn't the result of precipitation and other natural processes at all, but of a problem in Edina's subterranean infrastructure. When this happens, the damage must be fixed as quickly as possible.

Each year, cold air, water temperatures and other wintery conditions put extra strain on Edina's water main network. This, in turn, leads to a disproportionate percentage of water main breaks during the winter months.

Mains are buried approximately eight feet underground, notes Utilities Supervisor Gary Wells. In the event of a break, then, residents will not see a geyser-like burst. Instead, "water coming out of cracks in the pavement or out of grassy boulevard areas near streets" is common. The volume of that water usually indicates whether it is a water main break or the more localized leaking of a residential service line.

In addition to being more common, water main breaks are also more serious in the winter. Besides service outages, winter breaks also present a clear and immediate public

safety hazard. Leaked water can quickly form into sheets of ice – sometimes on busy streets and in clear weather conditions when drivers are unlikely to be on the lookout for ice.

The Public Works Department responds to water main breaks as soon as it hears of them. In order to minimize ice hazards, once a team arrives on scene, their first priority is to locate and close gate valves to slow down the flow. Residents are notified that the water will be shut off as long as is necessary for an emergency repair.

"Age of the pipes, soil conditions and climatic conditions all contribute to water main failures," Wells said. On average, the City will respond to about 24 breakages of varying severity each year. If a year's winter is comparatively mild, like in 2011, the average is lower.

If you see or suspect a water main issue during regular work hours (7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.), call Public Works at 952-826-0376. To report a break after business hours, call the Edina Police Department's non-emergency line, 952-826-1610. Police Dispatch will then contact the appropriate parties in the Public Works Department.

– Compiled by David Katz

Ice Control And Snow Plow Policies Keep Edina Safe Through The Worst Of Minnesota's Winters

A city's snow plows and salt trucks are only as effective as the policies that dictate how and when these resources are deployed. Fortunately, the Public Works Department has detailed snow plow and ice reduction guidelines in place to ensure Edina's roadways are cleared in a way calculated to ensure the least possible inconvenience to drivers.

For severe weather purposes, the City classifies each street based on primary function, traffic volume and community welfare concerns. High-volume routes that act as access roads for emergency vehicles are labeled "Red Routes." These receive first priority for both plowing and salting. Routes providing access to schools and commercial areas are second priority.

Only when these street tiers are clean will plows turn to low-volume residential roadways, alleys and City-owned parking lots. (Except in select cases, the clearing of sidewalks is the responsibility of property owners.)

Ordinarily, the plows clear the center of each roadway first so as to accommodate through-traffic while the rest of the buildup is cleared. When appropriate, Public Works will also deploy trucks to spread sand, salt and other chemicals to remove ice from the streets.

As a general rule, snow plows will not be dispatched for a snowfall of less than 1.5 inches. Streets Supervisor Shawn Anderson monitors snow accumulation, snow drift and ice conditions, and it falls on him to determine when plowing is necessary.

"Each storm is different," Anderson said. "Sometimes we have to wait it out and sometimes we have to fight it during the storm."

Be advised that severe cold, significant wind and limited visibility may inhibit City plows from reaching your street in a timely manner. In the event of extremely poor weather conditions, snow plows are put on temporary hiatus at the discretion of the Streets Division.

How To Help Plow Drivers Help You

Even when wind and dangerous temperatures are not a factor, though, plow drivers have a tough job ahead of them after each winter storm. Public Works Director Brian Olson notes that there are several simple things you can do to minimize obstacles.

"Don't pass snow plows when they're plowing, and wait until after the plow goes by to park your vehicle in the street." In addition, Olson strongly advises residents to keep sleds and toys away from the street when they are not being used, and not to shovel near the end of their driveways as the plow comes through.

Respecting snow plows is not merely a matter of courtesy, but also a safety concern, Olson noted, saying, "Frequent backing is necessary during plowing, and visibility to the rear is very limited."

One particularly troubling practice is the building of snow forts and snow bank tunnels on or near street curbs.

"Snow forts can easily conceal children and are very difficult to see when driving large snow plows," Olson said. Moreover, "Forts are usually only built when the snow is heavy and wet – not when it is light and fluffy and the most dangerous in terms of a collapse."

– *Compiled by David Katz*

Residents Asked To Follow Winter Parking Rules

Avoiding parking tickets and saving the grief and expense of recovering a towed vehicle is as easy as familiarizing yourself with the City of Edina's winter parking restrictions.

According to City regulations, no vehicle may be parked on a street, highway or alley under these conditions:

- From 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. Nov. 1 through March 31, regardless of wintry conditions.
- When 1.5 inches or more of snow has fallen. Once streets and roadways have been plowed to the curb line, residents can then park vehicles on designated roadways.
- For six hours after a snowfall has ended, unless City traffic signs specifically allow vehicles to park on roadways.

In order to clear Edina's streets, snow plows must have unimpeded access. Cars parked in the street prevent them from doing a thorough job.

Note that these rules are strictly enforced. The Edina Police Department records and tracks vehicles not in compliance with parking regulations. When a vehicle is in violation, an officer will issue a warning by means of an explanation card to the owner of the vehicle. If the Police Department encounters the

vehicle violating regulations a second time, the owner will be issued a citation.

Some snow storms are more severe than others. During significant weather events, if a vehicle is obstructing the path of a plow, the Police Department will attempt to locate the owner. If an owner cannot be found, the City will tow the vehicle.

For more information, contact the Edina Police Department at 952-826-1610.

– Compiled by David Katz



NO PARKING
1AM – 6 AM
ALL ROADS
NOV. 1 –
MARCH 31

Contractors Must Adhere To Snow Clearing Regulations

Whether you plan on being out of town for a long stretch, have a particularly long driveway or just don't want to invest the time and effort necessary to maintain your yard in the winter, you may wish to hire someone else to remove snow and ice in your stead. If you opt to go with a private snow plow contractor, though, make sure they are aware of local regulations before they begin their work.

Most notably, private plows must not deposit snow into or across a roadway. Any snow that is removed from a sidewalk or driveway must remain on that property or hauled away at the homeowner's expense.

The City of Edina Public Works Department will monitor private snow plowing contractors on a regular basis, though the property owner is ultimately responsible. Homeowners will receive a warning letter for violations on the first offense. If a second offense is reported, the City may issue the homeowner a fine of up to \$700.

– *Compiled by David Katz*

“Streets” continued from cover

native wildlife. In short, “clean streets mean clean waters,” Bintner said.

Here's where you come in. While the Streets Division is fully capable of clearing scattered leaves deposited on City streets by overhanging boughs and from wind, the sweepers can only do so much.

Residents who rake or blow leaves to the street curb or deposit grass clippings there severely hamper the machines' ability to do a thorough job. Consequently, plant nutrients have a much greater chance of leaching into the region's lakes in hazardous quantities.

So, while it can be tempting to view your property plot as an “island unto itself,” the next time you are out working in the yard, City staff encourage you to dispose of leaves and grass clippings in a way that won't hurt lakes and other natural resources.

“Cleaning up at the source is the cheapest and easiest way to help keep our waters clean,” Binter said.

For more information on street sweeping, contact the Public Works Department, 952-826-0376.

– *Compiled by David Katz*

Street Division ‘In The Trenches’ In The War On Potholes

During the shortest and coldest days of winter, we all look forward to the early harbingers of spring: from melting snow and blooming flowers, to lower heating bills and the return of Girl Scouts to your neighborhood.

Unfortunately, not all the signs are so heartening. Spring is also the prime season for new potholes.

Potholes are formed by water seeping into cracks in roadways and freezing in the winter. When this water expands, it creates small cracks that weaken the pavement. Traffic driving over these compromised spots can loosen and dislodge pieces of pavement, creating a hole.

Pot holes present a public safety hazard, and even small ones can harm the integrity and longevity of your car’s tires.

Rest assured, though, that the Public Works Department’s Streets Division is well equipped to fix these holes and works hard in all seasons to ensure that they are addressed in a timely manner.

During the winter, work crews fill pot holes with an emergency “cold mix” that keeps the roadway safe in the short term, said Streets Supervisor Shawn Anderson. Once temperatures rise sufficiently and the ground is warm and dry, the City can then add a “hot mix.” Unlike cold mix,

hot mix contains asphalt cement, which creates a lasting bond and patches the hole permanently.

Each May, the Streets Division goes on a “pothole blitz,” patrolling Edina’s streets and repairing potholes as they are seen. Thousands of potholes are repaired during the pothole blitz, using more than 140 tons of asphalt.

In total, the “asphalt season” runs from early May to the beginning of November, weather permitting, Anderson said.

However, some potholes can’t wait until May. Residents are urged to contact Edina Public Works and report dangerous spots on City streets. The most effective way is by filling out a service request online at www.EdinaMN.gov/PublicWorks. Reported problems are distributed to crews and given top priority.

For more information on potholes and other street repairs, visit www.EdinaMN.gov/PublicWorks or call the Public Works Department at 952-826-0376.

To report a pothole on a county highway or on a state aid street, such as France, York and Vernon avenues, visit Hennepin County’s website, www.hennepin.us, or call 612-592-0300.

To report a pothole on a state road or highway, contact the Minnesota Department of Transportation at 651-296-3000 or visit www.dot.state.mn.us.

– Compiled by David Katz and Jordan Gilgenbach

